The Christmas Tree Lesson

By Dorothy Blackmore

"IT would be perfect folly, George," the girl was saying.

"Thanks," the man replied, a little hurt.

"You know very well what I mean. It would be foolish—worse than foolish—for us to marry and—it is not because I do not love you, George," she added, earnestly.

"What on earth is necessary—except love?" asked the impatient man.

The girl laughed. "Much—much more," she said. "You admit, for instance, that you are absolutely bored to death in the country, that picnics, any kind of outing where you have to get down to nature is uninteresting to you. Even today you chafe under the discomfort of having to sit on a mossy mound instead of in a mahogany arm chair with a leather hassock at your feet. You would rather hear the clang of a trolley car than the song of a bird; you would rather eat a six-course dinner in a brilliantly lighted restaurant with music and the gay chatter of many companions than sit down quietly in your own home to a simple domestic meal with—with a single woman for a vis-a-vis. While, I—well, set down all the opposites of the things you live for and you have what I like. Don't you see, George?"

For a time the man did not answer. He counted the buttons on his gaiters with the tip of his walking stick.

"Is it as bad as that, girl?" he asked. "Are we as far apart as that?"

Eleanore nodded while she looked straight into his eyes. "We are," she repeated, "even as far as that."

"And there we stand—do we?"

"Yes—you in the city with all the lights turned on you; I in the quiet, peaceful country with only the eyes of my family and my friends to see me and all of nature to commune with."

"It doesn't look like a very happy prospect for a life together, Eleanore. We're old enough to see that—even in our 20's—aren't we? But oh—" and there was a great longing tenderness in his voice—"I do love you. I do want you, dear."

The girl turned away. Presently she rose to go. There was no buoyancy in her movement. At last, the thing she had been fearing had come to pass. They had had their explanation—they had tried to have an understanding as to why they could not marry each other. There was no further hope that he would tire of the life she considered artificial, the life she had been brought up in and—hated. Always, she had longed for the country and when she began to realize that she loved George Davidson it was with fading hope that she studied his life, his fancies, his preferences. He loved every inch of the merry avenues of the crowded cities, every atom of their existence.

On the way home the man told her frankly that if he could not have her—if she could not marry him and take a chance with it all—he would put her out of his life. He, manlike, was willing to take any chance to have her for his wife; but then, she explained to him, he had not given it the thought that was necessary.

"Well, I'll travel," Eleanore told him when they were parting. "I want to see rural France and Germany and—with you out of my life, George—I might be lonely," she said a little wistfully. She looked hastily away that he might not see the effort with which she kept the sparkling tear-drop from tumbling down her cheek. "And—if I find that I can come back and—and live with my ear on the trolley track, I'll—I'll come and let you know. Meantime, you shall not know where I am," she said, an almost imperceptible break in her voice. She had tried to be gay, but she had failed dismally—and she knew he knew it.

"All right, girl," the man said, holding her hand closely in his own, "Since you're afraid of adding to the long list of mis-mates among our friends—I'll remain as I am. I'll have you or no one, mate or mis-mate. Good-by."

He strode off with never a look behind and she knew he was gone out of her life until—"Oh, forever!" she said, as she dashed away the foolish tears that pushed each other from her eyes.

True to her word, she traveled. She journeyed here and there and enjoyed things as only a woman of her caliber can enjoy the beautiful, rare old things she had read of and heard of all her life.

When she returned to her own country it was to take up her profession of tutoring—but in the country this time. She found a home in the rectory of an old church. The minister was a family friend, and she went into the family to tutor his two children with the privilege of having a few others during odd hours in the week.

She spent many happy days with the children; she taught them everything she knew how to teach them, from reading and spelling to French and German, but, most of all, she taught them the love of Mother Nature.

The holidays were drawing near and Eleanore had little time for introspection. She was busy helping the children keep their Christmas secrets, planning for the Christmas tree in the church, making odds and ends to give to friends. For the time, she was almost forgotten.

But when Christmas eve had come and gone and she sat in the small conservatory of the rectory on Christmas afternoon when the children, tired from play, had gone to take an afternoon nap and the good rector with his wife had gone and done likewise, Eleanore began to have that lonely feeling deep within her. She looked out of doors where tiny snowflakes were just beginning to blow here and there as forerunners of a glorious Yuletide snowstorm.

Suddenly, as if to ward off the blues, she sought her cloak and gloves. She would go out in it if only because she could!

Outside, she struck out briskly toward the churchyard where the fir trees were green. There was much of the yard that was made up of beautiful parkways with wonderful blue spruce trees mingled with the old-fashioned green Christmas tree.

It was toward these trees that she walked and with every breath of the soft, moist air, she felt invigorated. The caress of each tiny snowflake as it touched her cheek was sweet to the girl who loved nature.

Presently, ahead of her, she saw a group of boys. They seemed to be looking up at a great green fir tree and listening to a man who stood in their midst.

Eleanore drew near. None of the little group had seen her as she walked softly on the snow covered grass. The man—her heart beat wildly—was George Davidson.

Suddenly, as if he felt her presence, he turned. "You," he cried, "Eleanore." Then, as if remembering the boys, he said, "Boys, I want to introduce you all to Miss Marvelle. Perhaps she can tell you more than I can about—Christmas trees."

Eleanore acknowledged the introduction to each bareheaded lad even while her hand was still in the big warm one of George Davidson.

"It's like this, Eleanore," he was explaining. "I've sort of taken up some settlement work on the East side lately, and when one of these boys asked me—not long ago—where the Christmas trees came from I—I felt ashamed to think he had been under my eye and didn't know. He'd never been out of the city in his life—had never seen a fir tree growing."

She Was Not Happy.

Eleanore's eyes grew wide with surprise. "Poor lad!" she said.

"Then and there, I promised the whole crowd of boys that on Christmas day I would take them to see a real Christmas tree growing in the earth where it belongs. I told them they should not have their gifts until we stood under one of Nature's own trees and—well, here we are. Aren't we, boys?" he asked, turning to the group of young foreigners who adored him.

"I was trying to tell them about—trees and things and—"

The man broke off lamely.

"And you didn't know very much about them? Was that it?" Eleanore asked, teasingly.

"That's it, exactly," he said. Then he drew near and spoke in an undertone while the lads, feeling instinctively that they were at liberty to roam about if they desired, left the two standing together.

"Is it too late for me—to learn?" he asked.

"No," she said, "but first, I'd like to exchange a few lessons in how to behave in a fashionable restaurant for them," she said.

"Eleanore!" he cried.

"Yes," she admitted, "it isn't so thrilling to sit on the porch all evening and watch the moon come up behind the trees—alone—even if it is Nature. I—suppose we combine our tastes and live in the country, but not so far that we can't get to town whenever we—you, I should say—feel like it."

"I feel now, dear, that I never want to see the city again if—if you don't want to," he said. "I'm so weary of living without you that I'd gladly camp under a haystack with nothing but the lowing herd for an outlook if you were with me."

W. F. & N. Grading

Last Friday J. W. Baughman, Chas. Ellsaesser, Mr. Copper of Omaha and J. F. McWilliams drove to the new town of Gate, in the east side of Beaver county. This is the first town to be established in Beaver county by the Wichita Falls & Northwestern, and the lots in the new town are now sale there by Mr. Hocker, the land and tax Commissioner of W. F. & N. A blue print of the new town of Forgan which if to be established as northern terminus of the railroad for the present is now in print, and a copy of it will arrive next week.

There are now a number of men and teams scattered along the right of way in Beaver county from Gate to the new town of Forgan, where one outfit has fifty teams ready for work as soon as the weather moderates. The Wichita Falls & Northwestern is coming along rapidly toward Liberal, the Capital of the Southwest.

The Good Fellows Busy

The Liberal Good Fellows are busy this year as usual. J. N. Evans and Charles Ellsaesser were out with the subscription list on Thursday, soliciting the Five Dollar subscriptions for the Good fellows' club, and were meetng with unusual good luck. The annual fee is Five Dollars and no donations for less amounts are accepted. Almost every business firm in town was on the list, and it is a certainty that not a single little boy or girl in Liberal will be without the good things that go to make Christmas the very best day in the year. Last year there was a balance left over after the committee had been busy all day trying to find places where the Good Fellows' asistance would be acceptable. The fund is a mighty fine thing, and the spirit is the best in the world. Those who know of places where the Good Fellows should go on Christmas day will help the good work along by notifying either J. N. Evans or Charles Elissesser before Monday morning. Everybody in Liberal must have a Merry Christmas—that is an edict that has been given out by the Good Fellows, and all who can help make this movement a success should do so.

WITH A HOPE FOR THE BEST

Elevator Man Willing to Concede That Republicans Might Be Saved.

As the elevator ascended in response to Mr. Topfloor's ring on the morning of election day he heard the elevator "boy" humming cheerfully under his breath.

"That's a fine song you are singing, Algernon," he remarked. "It is a hymn?"

"Yessah, dat am a hymn. It 'bout de mos' beautifules' in de hymn book, I t'ink. 'Wot de wo'ds?' Dese is de wo'ds," and with appropriate gestures he repated them.

"What were those lines about death, Algernon?" asked Mr. Topfloor. "Say them over." And Algernon, with arms extended and eyes rolled up, recited dramatically: "Oh, L'd, I stretch mah han's to thee. Save me f'om English death."

"'English death!' What's that?" demanded Mr. Torfloor.

"I never could fin' out jet' w'ot dat was, Md. Topfloo', but it means some-t'in' raight bad, I reckon. Mebbe it mean de oberlistin' fi'es."

"Maybee it does," agreed Mr. Topfloor, and to change the subject he inquired if Algernon had voted yet.

"Yessah, I votes! befo' I come to wu'k dis mornin'. Dis on'y de secon' time in mah life I's voted. De f[illegible] time was las' 'lection day. I made up mah min' den dat it was mah dooty to vote. I owes it to mah wife an' fam'ly. Eve'y one dat knows anyt'in' ought to vote, an' ef yo' has any business or wu'ke at somet'in', de way I does at dis elevator, votin' de bes' way to make you'se'f known to de public. Oh, Ah's a Dem'crat, sah, an' I votes de Dem'crat ticket r-a-i-g-h-t t'ro. Dem'crats is de bes'; Republicans day ain' much good, nohow. Yo'! Is yo' a Republican? An' is you' fam'l' Republicans? Well, well—w'ot—doe yo' t'ink o' dat! Yo' cert'ny don' seem like yo was one, sah; nuther do Mis' Topfloo'; an' I reckon dat w'en de good Lo'd come to jedge de Republicans he gwine to make rescriminations, so some ob dem will be saved."—New York Press.

"There's a Reason."

May—You seem to prefer the beach to the piazza.

Maud—Yes; I prefer to be burnt by the sun than roasted by the gossips.—Judge.